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Q. Aren't the prospects for Saudi stability as poor as Iran's were?

A. We believe that the differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran under the rule of the Shah are greater than are the similiarities.

-- For a variety of reasons -- including size of population, historic experience, legitimacy and broad public acceptance of the ruling order, the relationship of the regime to the national religion -- the Saudi experience is not comparable to that of Iran.

-- Saudi society has demonstrated a high degree of adaptability while undergoing rapid economic and social change.

-- The Saudi leadership remains in close contact with its people and has sought to carry forward national development while maintaining and strengthening its commitment to the Islamic values of the society.

-- In fact, Saudi Arabia has been one of our most stable friends. We believe that the incident last year at the Grand Mosque in Mecca was an aberration that does not reflect any widespread dissatisfaction among the Saudi populace.